Australian Bureau of Statistics

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New ABS report takes the economic pulse of Western Australia

A new publication launched in Perth today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) shows how Western Australia is meeting its economic challenges in the year 2000.

The report, **Western Australian Statistical Indicators,** is compiled by the Western Australian Office of the ABS. The Western Australian Regional Director of ABS, Mr Colin Nagle, said it provided a snapshot of the State's economy in the period leading up to the September quarter of 2000.

"We aim to draw together results from a wide range of individual ABS surveys and other sources to provide a 'big picture' focus for Western Australia's planners and decision makers," he said.

Highlights of the inaugural report show that:

- Unemployment continues to trend downward, falling by 300 in August 2000 to 61,000 people, the lowest level in over 10 years. The August unemployment rate of 6.2 per cent is the lowest recorded since October 1989.
- Profits from business in Western Australia are expected to increase into 2001, with capital expenditure expected to return to positive growth over the remainder of 2000 and into 2001.
- The CPI increased by 0.7 per cent in the June quarter 2000, the fifth consecutive quarter of growth. Main contributors were clothing (mainly women's clothing), up 3.0 per cent after recording price falls for the previous three quarters; tobacco and alcohol (mainly as a result of an increase in excise duty on alcoholic drinks), up 1.6 per cent; household equipment and operation (particularly household supplies and furniture), up 1.1 per cent; and transportation (mainly automotive fuel and vehicle insurance), up 1.0 per cent.
- New motor vehicle registrations rose sharply in original terms in July 2000 to be 44.4 per cent higher than June 2000 and 46.9 per cent higher than July 1999. Registrations for May and June 2000 were unseasonally low. Some commentators have attributed this, in part, to potential buyers holding back their purchase until the introduction of the GST on 1 July 2000, when abolition of the wholesale sales tax was expected to result in lower vehicle prices. The large increase in July reflects the release of this restrained demand.
- The trend estimate of the number of house approvals peaked in November 1999 reflecting reports that new home buyers had brought forward their building plans to avoid increases in construction costs resulting from the introduction of the GST. Since that time, the trend has been in decline, with June 2000 house approvals down 8.3 per cent from the previous month, and 30.5 per cent from the level recorded in June 1999. Strong growth in 1999 residential approvals continues to flow through to record levels of residential building commencements and work under construction. The value of residential building under

construction at the end of March 2000 was a record $1.710 billion, up 13.3 per cent on December quarter 1999 and 47.2 per cent on March quarter 1999.

- The number of dwellings financed by first home buyers rebounded strongly in July 2000, up 88.4 per cent on June 2000. This follows the introduction on 1 July 2000 of the $7,000 First Home Owner Grant.

The new publication **Western Australian Statistical Indicators, September 2000** (cat. no.1367.5) is available from ABS bookshops. The summary of the publication can be found on this site. If you wish to purchase a copy of this publication, contact the ABS Bookshop in your capital city.

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